

ADDRESS

by

LIEUTENANT GENERAL VERNON A. WALTERS

before

CHARLOTTESVILLE COMMITTEE

COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Charlottesville, Virginia

9 June 1976

Thank you very much General Porter, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am very happy to be here tonight to see General Porter again. I think General Porter probably has influenced my life as an army officer more than any other officer that I have ever known, by what he was and by the way he did things. He is one of the truly extraordinary army officers I have met in my life. He is one of the truly extraordinary Americans I have met in my life. He is probably as embarrassed as Mrs. Slaven was a minute ago.

Well I did want to talk to you, and I will tell you what I would like to do. I would like to talk to you about intelligence. Basically, what it is, why we need it, how we get it, and some of the accusations that have been hurdled around rather loosely over the past year.

Intelligence is basically information concerning the activities, intentions, or equipment of foreign nations that can in some way impact upon our lives. Why do we need it? We need it for the same reason that George Washington needed it, but with an added fillip of which I will speak in a minute. How do we get it? We get it in three basic ways which I will touch upon in a minute.

In the old days, the United States was considered by most nations to be unreachable and therefore unbeatable. We were outside, in a sense, the mainstream of modern history until a relatively recent time.

In the past, very few people had large holdings of American currency. Today we have billions of petro and Eurodollars moving all

over the world and being used and applied in ways that can affect the livelihood of an American in Tampa or in Omaha. We must know what is being done. We must know why these things are being used, and in what way they are to be used, and we face for the first time in our national history since the Revolution another global power. This intelligence is not merely the collection of facts. It is the assembly of facts, the analysis of these facts in timely fashion. And this analysis, I think, is one of the great contributions the United States has made to the technique of intelligence. Many people say that another profession is the oldest profession. I always claim that intelligence is the oldest profession, because before anybody could patronize any other of the other professions they had to know where they were. This required intelligence.

We have always in our American history had a slightly ambivalent attitude toward intelligence that has continued up to this day. Now at the CIA we have a statue of Nathan Hale which was put there over my protest. Not that I don't think Nathan Hale was a very brave young man and that he made an immortal statement. My view was that Nathan Hale was an intelligence agent who was caught on his first mission, and he had all the evidence on him, which is not what I feel we should be holding up to our young career trainees. He was sent into Manhattan Island to find out where and when the British were going to land. They were already there. And before he went, in a breach of security, he told a friend of his

that he was going behind the British lines as a spy. And the friend looked at him and he said, "Nathan, how can you stoop so low as to become a spy?" He evidently hadn't read his bible or he would have known that spies were sent into the land of Canaan 20 centuries before. But we have had this ambivalent attitude toward intelligence, and we sometimes tend to think that we didn't do this sort of thing in our history. But I will get to that in a minute.

Why do we need intelligence? Well, we face a situation today in which we see the Soviet Union, a nation with a larger population than ours, deploying five, possibly six, new systems of inter-continental ballistic missiles, their third-generation systems -- each one of them carries greater weight and is more accurate than the missile it replaces. We see the Soviet Union moving in the last six or seven years from a coast guard type navy to a blue water navy. We see the Soviet Air Force developing aircraft with the capability against the United States. We see the Soviet Union developing and upgrading all of its conventional forces around the periphery of the Soviet Union, not just facing us but facing China also. We see a tremendous increase in the support and the logistics that are given to the Soviet units around the world. We have recently before us Angola, as a clear indication that the Soviet Union is not only capable but willing to project its power 10,000 miles from the Soviet Union. I cannot tell you what the intentions of the Soviet leadership are, but I can tell you what the capabilities are. And they have these capabilities that I

have just described. Now it is the duty of the people who work in intelligence to make the policymakers in our country aware. After all a sound foreign policy has got to be based on good intelligence. If you do not know what the facts are, there is no way you can prepare to face up to them, or to decide what policy our country should adopt. And I would submit that the existence of an effective American intelligence organization is one of the greatest inhibitions in the world, against anyone attempting another Pearl Harbor on us. After all we recovered from Pearl Harbor because we had time and distance. Could we recover from a nuclear Pearl Harbor? And this is what I think everyone of us in intelligence keeps before him constantly. He faces a threat of a magnitude that this nation has not faced since Valley Forge. Whether these forces that I speak of are actually to be deployed against us or not is another question. But these forces exist. For the first time in our national history, another power has the capability of inflicting grave or even mortal damage on the United States. Germany at the height of her power was a continental power; apart from sending submarines off our coast, Germany had no real capability to harm the United States. The Soviet Union does. China will have that capability tomorrow. As I see it, we in intelligence owe the American people four overriding answers. We owe our policymakers, whoever they may be, the answer to four overriding questions.

Five years from today, who will be in control of the Soviet Union and what will their disposition be toward us and our allies? What is there in Soviet research and development that will impact on the lives of Americans tomorrow? And the same two questions for China? In addition to that, we have a whole series of new things. We have international terrorism. We have the possible proliferation of nuclear weapons. We have the whole immense field of economic intelligence. In many countries, economic intelligence are the real secrets. It is not the military secrets that are the real secrets. What that country's economic and financial policies are going to be is one of the real secrets. And as I say, the financial situations that exist today -- the possession by other nations of vast amounts of American currency -- is vitally important to us in knowing what we are going to do.

We have come very late to the field of economic intelligence. In the old days in the United States, economic intelligence used to be regarded as the sort of by-product of the military capabilities study. Today it is a science unto itself as it has been in most other countries for many years.

How do we get this intelligence? Basically we get this intelligence in three ways. We collect it overtly, that is from the newspapers, from public radio broadcasts, through our embassies, through ordinary contacts by private citizens, through all of the

ways that are perfectly open. And this provides us, I would say, with 50 percent of our intelligence. People do not realize that a very high percentage of what goes into intelligence publications comes from the very ordinary reporting of American embassies around the world. They have a vast body of people, especially trained, highly capable observers, and this comes in. This gives you as I say, perhaps 50-60 percent of your total take of intelligence. Then you have the vast technical and electronic systems, which collect facts that were never available to you before, when working against a closed society like the Soviet Union or China. In the early 1960s, we had a tremendous debate about whether or not there was a missile gap. Such a debate would be impossible today. We know what the state of missiles is, theirs as against ours. And most important, they know that we know.

For instance, we have had the Soviet military delegates at some of the SALT talks take our people aside when we had been discussing what they had and say to us "Why are you telling our civilians all these things? They are not supposed to know what we have got." This is members of the Soviet delegations about other members of the Soviet delegations. So they know that we know. And that in itself is an inhibition against any attempt to surprise us.

We collect a very large amount through these technical systems. And here again, the American inventive genius that has made us the

great industrial nation that we are, that has taken us to the moon, has been applied in the sense of enabling us to obtain from these closed societies the secrets that they can obtain very often in the United States by simply subscribing to a monthly magazine.

Then maybe you collect 30 percent of your intelligence like that. And then you have a small additional amount that you must get from the people. This is the so-called dirty tricks, clandestine, spying, or anything else depending on the degree of opprobrium you want to put on it. No satellite will look inside a man's head; no electronic system can tell you what goes on in a man's brain; it is only people who can tell you about people. You can find out all about capabilities from the previous things that I have described. But to find out what is in someone's mind, you need people. I sometimes say that we carry around our neck the millstone of James Bond. This is the part of intelligence that titillates everybody and excites everybody and they think this is all we do. This is a very small part of what we do, but very important. The easiest intelligence is the one you get overtly. The medium intelligence is the one you get with the technical systems. The really tough, hard intelligence is the one you get through people. And it takes a very special kind of people to do this; to collect this kind of intelligence.

Seventy-six thousand people have passed through the Central Intelligence Agency since it was founded. Why was it founded?

It was founded because at the Pearl Harbor investigation it was discovered that various parts of the US Government all had little pieces of information which, had they been brought together in one central place, perhaps couldn't have avoided Pearl Harbor but could greatly have diminished the effects of it. And it was because since there was no such central repository that, after the war, it was decided to create the Central Intelligence Agency which came into being in 1947. Hence, the name even, Central Intelligence Agency, this was to be the central repository where these things were brought in.

Now the Congress knew perfectly well when it created the Central Intelligence Agency that it was creating the Central Intelligence Agency to spy, to use the current crude word, the opprobrious word. But that is not what the Congress said in the Act. They said, "they will do such other things as the National Security Council may direct," thereby leaving quite deliberately vague what it was they wanted done.

The last charter under which we, in the Central Intelligence Agency, were operating before the recent events was the Doolittle Committee, which in the 50s investigated the Central Intelligence Agency, the collection of intelligence generally, and came up with the report that the United States faced a ruthless and determined enemy who was determined to destroy us. And to survive we would have to match their determination with ours and their ruthlessness

with ours. Now one of the difficult things to do is to try and judge what happened yesterday or the day before yesterday in the light of today's morality. What would we say of the founding fathers of our country who did not grant universal suffrage, even at the same time when they said all men were created equal? You cannot, without grave distortion, judge yesterday by standards of today.

Now I get to these allegations about the Central Intelligence Agency which you have heard a great deal about in recent years. In fact, the other day I saw a cartoon that I thought was pretty good. It showed a couple at the movies, and one leaned over to the other and said, "This must be a real old movie, the CIA are the good guys." We have had a deliberate and malicious attempt to tell the American people that the real threat to their liberties was the CIA, and the FBI, and the defense intelligence agencies. And this is just nonsense, I can't tell you that there haven't been abuses by these organizations, that there haven't been exercises of bad judgments, that we haven't had some nuts and kooks, to speak alone for the Central Intelligence Agency. As I told you we have had 76,000 people go through there, and I submit that if you took our record and compared it to any other community of 76,000 people over a period of 27 years in the United States that we would look good, even if you put us alongside of Health, Education, and Welfare or Agriculture.

As of tonight not one, with all the loose talk of criminality and illegality and everything else, not one member of that organization has been convicted of any crime against the freedoms of the American people. Not one member of that organization has been indicted by a grand jury anywhere in the United States for any such crime. But as I said, I can't tell you that there haven't been some things done, that I would have preferred not be done. But you take a body of 76,000 troops in a community of 76,000 people, and look at their record over a couple of years and I promise you that there would be a couple of murders, and a couple of other crimes, and so forth, that we either haven't committed or haven't been found out. And if we haven't been found out, all that I can say is that Senator Church hasn't been doing as good a job as we have been told he has been doing. We have had all of our pockets emptied for the world to see in a striptease that has no parallel in any democratic country in the world, not just the United States. And we do not have a monopoly on democracy. There are other democratic countries, and none of them has ever been through this sort of thing.

I sometimes receive heads of friendly foreign services in my office and they come in with a slightly glassy look, and I say, "What is it?" They say, "When we turned off the road, I saw a

sign and it said CIA. I've never heard of anybody putting road signs to their secret intelligence service."

A head of a friendly foreign service told me this story. This is a story against the Italians, but I really suspect it was against us Americans. He said that at one point the Soviets recruited a neopolitan spy in Naples. And they took him to Moscow, and they trained him in short-wave communications, and microdots, secret writing and invisible inks and everything else. Then they said, "You go back to Naples and stay there and we will be getting in touch with you in a couple of years, and tell you what we want you to do." So three years later the guy from Moscow went to the address in Naples. He looked at the door on the outside and Agnello was the man's name. And he said, "Agnello, ground floor, right." So he went in and pushed the bell and the man opened the door and he said, "Mr. Agnello?" and he said "Yes." "I have come from Moscow." The man looked at him and said "There is a mistake. I am Agnello the tailor; Agnello the spy is on the third floor."

Sometimes, we have a national vision of ourselves that does not correspond to historical reality. You get this business of all this spying and dirty-handed stuff is all right for those dirty old British, Russians, French, and Germans, but we pure, noble, fine, upstanding Americans, we don't do that sort of thing.

In this bicentennial year, I have been doing some research on the founding fathers and what they were up to. And you would be amazed at what the founding fathers were up to.

Let me take the case of George Washington. I would say that George Washington was probably one of the greatest readers of other people's mail in American history. He kept sending messages saying, "Intercept his letters and lay them before me." He also organized three separate attempts to kidnap Benedict Arnold; all of which were intelligence failures. He also attempted to kidnap a 17 year-old midshipman of the royal navy in New York City in 1781. This midshipman happened to be Prince William who was the fourth son of George the Third. In fact, there were two people killed in the attempt to kidnap the Prince. I regret to tell you that this too was an intelligence failure. There were no post-mortems of that intelligence failure, however.

Fifty years later the American minister to the Court of St. James was telling King William the Fourth about this and he said, "But your Majesty, in your case, General Washington sent word that you would be treated with great kindness and deference, unlike Benedict Arnold, and the King said, "Well, I am damn glad he didn't get a chance to demonstrate it to me." Then we move on to Benjamin Franklin. Now Benjamin Franklin for three years before the Revolution when we were all loyal subjects of George III, was the Assistant Postmaster of British North America. And you know

what he was doing. He was opening all that mail like crazy. And the British caught him and they took him to London and they tried him before the Privy Council and they found him guilty. But before they could sentence him, he skipped off to France where he set up the American Commissioners' Office to try to conduct the covert operation to get the French into the war on our side, in which he was successful. While there, he designed and had the French build him a printing press. And what was printed on this printing press -- forged British currency, forged British passports, and most of all, fabricated atrocity stories for insertion into the British press. However, he was not totally successful. An ancestor of Anthony Eden was heading up British intelligence in Paris in those days and he did a rather successful job against the American Commissioners' Office. As a matter of fact, 42 hours after Louis XVI's foreign minister told the 3 American commissioners, and only the 3 American commissioners, that France was coming into the war on the side of the Revolution, that information was in the hands of the British government in London. Now if you took a horse in Paris and rode it at full speed to the Channel and took a boat and rode a horse from the British coast to London, it'd take about 42 hours. So the question arises, "Who," and I regret to tell you there is no answer as to whom.

Not long ago, I had dinner with Anthony Eden, now Lord Avon, in Florida and he was telling me what a hard time his ancestor, Robert Eden, Royal Governor of Maryland, had during the Revolution

because the Americans thought he was a British Tory and the British thought he was an American spy. And I said, "Yes, Lord Avon, but in the meantime his brother William was successfully penetrating the American Commissioners' Office in Paris." He looked at me rather sharply and he said "Oh, you know about that do you?"

The only thing I will not tell you is that, well, I probably will, is where these spies during the Revolution were trained. They were trained not far from here at a fort, which I don't often mention, the name of the fort was Fort Loony, which was an unfortunate name. However, we had very good intelligence and there was a tough time because it was really in a sense a civil war and the other side spoke the same language and so forth. John Jay who was made a chief justice of the US, ran a thing for the Continental Congress called the Committee of Secret Correspondence. And one day the Committee of Secret Correspondence was asked by the Congress to lay before it the names of its agents and the amounts paid to them. And John Jay's reply was (and he got away with it), "Experience has shown that the Congress consists of too many people to keep this kind of secret and that such revelations have generally been fatal, not merely to the projects, but to some of the people involved." Now we have no quarrel with Congressional oversight, providing it is done in a responsible and discrete fashion. I might add that if we have Congressional oversight we are going to be the only democratic country in the world in which the intelligence service is a branch of the Executive which is responsible to the Congress.

However, we've organized it that way and we, in intelligence, have no difficulty in living with any oversight committee. But as of right now, if we, at the direction of the President, undertake a covert action program, we have to report it to 7 committees of the House and Senate constituting more than 50 percent of the total membership of Congress. We have not proposed a single covert operation since the law went into effect requiring us to report them, which has not leaked, not one. This kind of leaking has been used as grist for the propaganda mill of the enemies of the United States. Other countries do this but they don't feel the same urge to confess that we do. One of my foreign friends said the other day, "I marvel that all of you Americans aren't Catholic." I said, "Why, what has that got to do with it?" "Well," he said, "Remember it's the only religion that offers confession for everybody." "But," he said, "I suppose it's the fact that it is private in a small wooden box that's the real drawback." They marvel at some of the things that we do, supposedly. We say, oh, but we're different, and so forth and so on. And they said, "yes, indeed you are different; the rest of us could not operate this way."

We would have absolutely no difficulty with the proper reasonable congressional oversight. As I told you, yes, there have been abuses. Let me go into some of these abuses which have been bandied around so loosely. First is the assassination story. Well, the net result of an exhaustive investigation of assassinations by both the House and Senate committees is that nobody was assassinated.

Yes, there was a lot of loose talk about it, but nobody was assassinated. Now we had a bunch of Congressmen out the other day at CIA and the question of assassination came up and somebody said, "Well, but if you could have assassinated Adolf Hitler in '43 or '44, you would have probably been the first joint recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor and the Victoria Cross." And one of the very young, very liberal Congressmen said, "But think, if you could have gotten him in '35 or '36 how many lives you would have saved." And I said, "Congressmen, do I understand that you are advocating assassination in peacetime?" He said, "Oh no, but that's different." My own view of assassination is that I am against it for at least three good reasons -- it's against the law of God, it's against the law of man, and it doesn't work -- you just get another fanatic worse than the first one. But, at the time and to put this into perspective and this is all I am trying to do; I'm not trying to excuse the things that were done, I am trying to put them into perspective. At the time that this loose talk about assassinating was going on, Castro specifically, Fidel Castro was shooting people every day in front of the television cameras in the national stadium in Havana. Two presidents of the US, one Republican and one Democratic, had approved an expedition to land in Cuba by force of arms and I'm sure that they could not have believed that Fidel Castro was going to receive us with rose petals or palm branches, and that there were going to be people killed. I have no documentary evidence

to prove it, but I am positive that the people who were talking about this sort of thing (it was never carried into reality) believed that they were doing it on the authority of higher authority. Whether they were or not, I have no evidence, but I am convinced the way I know that they believed that they did; net result: nobody was assassinated. But the propaganda use of this that was made, the Americans are assassinating people and everything, was tremendous against us. Let's take the next one. The drugs. Why were we experimenting with drugs? We saw a man like Cardinal Mindszenty in Hungary who had resisted every pressure the Nazis could bring to bear on him suddenly appear before the newsreel cameras hollow-eyed to confess to every crime in the book. We thought this was done with drugs. We thought they might be used upon our diplomats or upon our military. We had to find out how they worked and so forth. Obviously the man who gave the LSD to the man without his knowledge was an imbecile. But this is why we were investigating this sort of thing. Not just the CIA and the armed forces, the National Institutes of Health was conducting the same kind of research. Many universities were conducting the same kind of research and at that time nobody felt it was anything particularly monstrous. I might add that the US renounced the use of poison gas between the two wars, but that did not prevent the US from making many millions of poison gas shells for use for retaliation if they were used against us. Every

nation has contingency plans. Basically what a lot of people have done is reached into our files and taken out contingency plans and said, "Ah ha, this is what you were going to do." Toxins were never used. The dart gun which you saw brandished so photogenically for the television cameras and everything else, was admittedly never used. Dart guns like this and similar weapons were used by the Soviets in the late 50s to kill five or six people in West Germany. Here again, the problem, this may be used against us, how does it work, how do we experiment to defend ourselves against it, but the dart gun was never used. Then you had the break-ins. Oh, the break-ins! Well, who were these break-ins and how many of them were there? You have the impression that no American was safe in his house, that the CIA was breaking into peoples' houses all over the US. The Director of the Central Intelligence Agency is the only person in the USA who is charged by the law with the protection of his sources and methods. And if you wanted to be loose that would authorize him to do almost anything. In every case these break-ins were at the homes of CIA people who were suspected of taking documents home with them. OK, it isn't legal in the eyes of what we do now, but in the sense of emergency and the sense of commitment to stop communism that the US felt, and remember, most of the things we are talking about occurred 15-30 years ago. We're not talking about the recent past of most of these things. The mail opening. You get the impression that

the CIA was reading everybody's mail. The only letters that were opened were letters going to or coming from the Soviet Union or China. You read about that terrible case of Senator Church's letter to his mother that was opened. Well, Senator Church posted that letter in Moscow, and anybody could write that as a return address on the envelope. No letters were opened that were not going to or coming from the Soviet Union or China and therefore no letters were opened by us that had not already been, or were not about to be opened by the Chinese or the Soviets since they censor all their international correspondence. Frankly it is against the law and we cannot do it, but as an American soldier, I feel much more embarrassed about reading my enlisted mens' mail during the war than I do about something like this, where we got many important leads that led us to people who were doing things against the US. OK, it's not in the morality of today, but we opened letters during all our periods of wartime. Now we have been told that it's not to be done and we are not doing it. One of the things that concerns me is that our generation of leadership has been pilloried for its sins of commission. What I am concerned of is that 10-15 years from today our successors will not be pilloried for their sins of omission. You mean we weren't watching this, you mean we weren't taking care of that, you mean you weren't doing this. Let me go on with these things.

Telephone taps. The impression here again has been spread around widely that the CIA was listening to everybody's telephone calls. Exactly how many of these telephone taps were there, and, here again, these were mostly on our own people. And we are charged with the security of our own people by law. There were 32 telephone taps in 27 years. That's 1 and 1/5 telephone taps a year. But the American people have been given the impression that everybody was being listened to and this is just not simply true. This is part of this impression to convey to the American people that the Soviets are not a threat to us, we have nothing to fear from the outside, the real threat to our freedom is the CIA and the FBI. Well, let me go to that. Gestapo secret police. The CIA has never had authority to arrest anybody. How do you become a secret police when you can't arrest anybody? I don't know, but these are some of the things that have been alleged against us. I'm not trying to justify any. We recognize we have been restricted against doing them and so forth. But what the American people want done in this field has varied greatly with the degree of threat they have felt. If they feel very threatened they want a great deal done in this area; if they don't feel very threatened, they don't want anything done in this area. Then you get this thing of the CIA has a private foreign policy of its own and it goes around overthrowing foreign governments and everything else. The CIA isn't doing

anything of the sort. The CIA supports the people it is told to support and it doesn't support the people it is told not to support by the properly constituted authority of the US. Why do we have covert action? Every nation in history has had covert action. Only the US has seen fit to take it apart in a sort of public dismemberment. How does anybody think we got Texas or California? How does anybody think we got Hawaii? By spontaneous local uprising. The French had 17,000 men in North America before France entered the war against Great Britain. If you put that on a modern scale it would be the equivalent of having 250,000 men. The real point of issue is, should the US have anything between the diplomatic protest and landing American troops. Should we have any means of quietly assisting our friends when the other side is very less quietly assisting theirs. You've heard about the CIA putting \$10,000,000 into Chile. In that same period of time, the Soviet Union and its allies provided \$450 million to the Allende government in one form or another. You've heard about the CIA overthrowing the Chilean government. Quite clearly in the investigations, it came out that the CIA had given help to democratic parties to democratic newspapers but that the CIA had had no contact whatsoever with General Pinochet and his military group who overthrew Salvador Allende. We had had no contact whatsoever with this group. This was gone into in great detail by the various investigating committees and they ascertained that this was a fact.

You know that we Americans sometimes tend to flagellate ourselves. Something terrible happens in Nepal and immediately we turn in self-consciously and say what have we done wrong in Nepal? One of the tendencies of our character is to flagellate ourselves in this way. I submit that what the United States has done this century has no parallel with history. We are the only nation in history ever to finance our competitors back into competition. We won a number of great wars this century, we have not taken one piece of territory from anybody, we have not required anybody to become an American citizen who did not want to become one, and nowhere in history has any victor ever reached out and helped up the vanquished to the degree that we have. I think we have nothing to be ashamed of in this area. We have lifted these people up, we have raised their aspirations, we have helped them to move forward in many fields. But as we move into the last quarter of this century, I think the real issue before the American people is not: were there, as we readily acknowledge, a number of aberrations and uses of bad judgments in some fields of intelligence? But really, the issue is this: will the United States in this last quarter of this century, have eyes to see and the ears to hear, or will we stumble forward blindly until the day we have to choose between nuclear blackmail and abject capitulation. And we cannot do this, for if we fall, there is no one else to pick up the torch.